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Climate, Security, Health, and Resilience Speaker Series

NILS PETTER GLEDITSCH

"Climate Change: A Threat to the Waning of War"

Monday, February 16, 2015, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Ave. Columbus, OH 43201

[To view the event recording, please click here.](#)

[To download the podcast of the event, please click here.](#)

Nils Petter Gleditsch is research professor at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and professor emeritus at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. He served as president of the International Studies Association in 2008-09 and edited the *Journal of Peace Research* (1977-78, 1983-2010). His current research interests are on the decline of war and on the security implications of environmental change.

Relevant publications include *"Demand, Supply, and Restraint: Determinants of Domestic Water Conflict and Cooperation"* (Gleditsch, et. al. 2013), published in *Global Environmental Change*; "Whither the weather? Climate change and conflict" (Gleditsch, 2012) published in the *Journal of Peace Research*; *"Conflicting Messages? The IPCC on Conflict and Human Security"* (Gleditsch & Ragnhild, 2014), published in *Political Geography*; and "Is Climate Change a Driver of Armed Conflict?" (Gleditsch, Thesien, and Buhaug, 2013), published in *Climatic Change*.

Abstract

War remains a major threat to human security. However, despite many recent dramatic events, war is on the wane as a tool in human affairs. The number of ongoing armed conflicts, the lethality of war as measured by annual battle-deaths, and the incidence of genocide and politicide and other forms of one-sided violence are all declining.

Scholars have outlined various possible challenges to the continued waning of war. A leading candidate is climate change, which is widely believed to wreak havoc not just to the economy but also to the security of the planet. However, the evidence base for such beliefs is precarious. Scholars have failed to agree on any robust relationship between climate change and conflict. And the most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the consequences of climate change does not provide a clear basis for alarmist predictions.

Armed violence continues to present an urgent problem, as is seen notably in several ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. But research indicates that economic and political factors trump climatic ones in generating violence, and this is where countermeasures to violence should be focused. With regard to the social effects of climate change, other problems are probably more important than war. The main concern is simply uncertainty.

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